

---

A Letter from Kassite Nippur

Author(s): Robert D. Biggs

Source: *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (1965), pp. 95-102

Published by: [The American Schools of Oriental Research](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1359113>

Accessed: 24/05/2013 02:51

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The American Schools of Oriental Research is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

## A LETTER FROM KASSITE NIPPUR

ROBERT D. BIGGS

University of Chicago  
Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.

The letter presented here,<sup>1</sup> concerned mainly with construction and irrigation problems in Nippur,<sup>2</sup> was sent to the king (addressed as *bēli* “my lord”) by one of his administrative officials,<sup>3</sup> Banâ-ša-Marduk, and is datable to the Kassite period.

One of the best documented eras in the history of Nippur is perhaps the Kassite period, thanks to the discovery of the administrative archives by the University of Pennsylvania’s Babylonian Expedition in the season 1889–90 and the discovery of additional tablets from a different area, apparently Tablet Hill, between 1893 and 1895.<sup>4</sup>

1. I am indebted to Professors A. L. Oppenheim, Erica Reiner, and W. G. Lambert for suggestions on several points; Professor A. Goetze has likewise offered helpful suggestions. The tablet is the property of a private collector who has kindly permitted its publication. Its provenance is not known, though it was said to come from the region of Adab. It measures 8.6 x 5.2 x 2.2 cm. and is unbaked.

2. The temple names make it quite clear that the letter was written in Nippur.

3. Since the letter begins with a report on the offerings and rites of the temple, and since the building work is on the temples, it is clear that this official was in a position of authority in the temple. What was his position? The SANGA is not attested in any of the published Nippur documents of this period. It is more likely that he was a GŪ.EN.NA (see CAD s.v. *guen-nakku* for references), the head of administration in Nippur. See K. Balkan, AfO 15 130 for discussion of the GŪ.EN.NA’s functions; Balkan also states that the sequence of GŪ.EN.NA’s from Kurigalzu II to Kaštiliaš IV (correcting his III to IV, III apparently being a typographical error in the original article in Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi 2 p. 47, repeated in the German summary cited here) can now be established, but, since some of his data are from unpublished texts, we cannot verify whether or not Banâ-ša-Marduk was a holder of this office.

4. See BE 14 p. 1. The tablets from the different areas were not kept separate by the excavators, and it is probably impossible now to reconstruct the contents of the two lots, though probably the contracts are all from Tablet Hill. Further contracts of the same period have been found recently on Tablet Hill (McCown, JNES 11 173). The archives consist, in any case, of many thousands of administrative documents and hundreds of letters. Hilprecht, Excavations in Assyria and Babylonia p. 414 estimates that about 18,000 tablets of the Kassite period were recovered.

These records have been almost entirely ignored by historians, partly because they contain relatively little of relevance to political history and because they are only partially published in translations.<sup>5</sup> They are, nevertheless, a rich source for the social and economic history of the Kassite period from the beginning of the reign of Burnaburiaš II to the end of the reign of Kaštiliaš IV, ca. 1375–1235 B.C.

To judge from the Nippur letters, a considerable amount of land was included in the royal domain in the Kassite period. At the same time, a certain amount of property seems to have been held by the temples, particularly the temple of Enlil,<sup>6</sup> which also maintained separate organizations of laborers. The temple’s fiscal affairs and even the maintenance of offerings were firmly under royal control, as was irrigation for the entire community, all probably administered by the GŪ.EN.NA. One has the impression from the Nippur letters that the whole irrigation system was highly organized and that the available water resources were fully utilized. The countryside would seem to have been dotted with villages and settlements, each with its own local administrator (*hazannu*), with a network of canals supplying water to the whole region.

While some of the Nippur letters *ana bēliya* are perhaps addressed to persons other than the king,<sup>7</sup> the majority are certainly addressed to

5. Some of the administrative documents (mostly published in BE 14 and 15 and PBS 2/2) have been translated by H. Torczyner, Altbabylonische Tempelrechnungen, Vienna, 1913. More than fifty of the letters (published in BE 17 and PBS 1/2) were translated by H. Waschow, “Babylonische Briefe aus der Kassitenzeit,” MAOG 10/1; several more, now in Jena, have been published by I. Bernhardt and J. Aro, Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller Universität Jena 8 567–574. See also JCS 6 137–145.

6. See below. Cf. also A.ŠÀ ša EN.KUR.KUR “field of the Lord of the Lands (Enlil)” BE 17 24:14, ÍD nam-ga-ri ša EN.KUR.KUR BE 17 59:9, and passim in Kassite Nippur documents. Possibly these names are to be taken as *Flurnamen*, however.

7. Waschow, *op. cit.* p. 6 cites BE 17 5 and PBS 1/2 58 as letters proving that the king was not the *bēlu*, but these examples are unconvincing. See also Balkan,

the king, who is, however, never addressed by his name. That "my lord" is the king is also especially clear from letters such as this one where there are parallels between "the god"<sup>8</sup> and "my lord."

Radau concluded from his study of the Kassite letters<sup>9</sup> that since the letters were found in Nippur and were addressed to the king, the king must, in this period, have had his principal headquarters in Nippur, basing his conclusion partly on the assumption that Dūr-Kurigalzu was in the immediate vicinity of Nippur.<sup>10</sup> While the king certainly came to Nippur on occasion,<sup>11</sup> there is no evidence that the royal court was elsewhere than in Babylon or Dūr-Kurigalzu.<sup>12</sup> Most of the Nippur letters are, in fact, probably copies of the letters which were actually sent, a suggestion which removes the difficulty of Nippur officials writing from Nippur to the king when he was himself supposedly in Nippur.<sup>13</sup>

*loc. cit.*, who states, without supporting argument, that the *bēlu*-letters are "von hohen Beamten oder Adeligen an ihre Untergebenen."

8. In Nippur texts "the god" is certainly Enlil.

9. BE 17 pp. 29-58.

10. It is in fact near Baghdad at the well known site 'Aqar Qūf, partially excavated by the Iraqi Directorate General of Antiquities, preliminary reports in Iraq, Suppl. 1944 and 1945, also Iraq 8 73-93.

11. Cf. PBS 1/2 58 where the king is told he should not come to Nippur as planned, for the omens were unfavorable. More important are the documents referring to the "coming up" of the king (*e-li* LUGAL): ITI ŠE.KIN.KUD UD.29.KAM MU.12.KAM *e-li* LUGAL PBS 2/2 57:8, ITI ŠE.KIN.KUD UD.30.KAM *e-li* LUGAL MU.12.KAM BE 15 33:7, ITI BĀRA.ZAG.GAR UD.2.KAM MU.13.KAM *e-li* LUGAL BE 15 34:7. It is immediately apparent that they cover the very end of one year (the month of Addaru) and the very beginning of the next (Nisanu) and thus that the king was in Nippur for the new year's festival. Except for texts of the new year's ritual itself and statements in the chronicles that the festival was not held in the years the king was absent from Babylonia, we have very few allusions to the new year's festival. There has previously been no hint that it was held anywhere but in Babylon itself. (The king's name is not given in these three documents; only Kudur-Enlil and Kaštiliaš IV are excluded.)

12. The construction work reported in BE 17 23, which required ten thousand large baked bricks and thousands of sun dried bricks, could as well be an administrative building as a royal palace.

13. See F. R. Kraus, JCS 1 112. It is well known that the Amarna archive included copies of letters sent by the pharaohs to princelings in Western Asia. See also,

Since letters are undated, the only basis for dating the Nippur letters has been prosopography. By comparing carefully the names of persons in the letters with those in the dated administrative documents, it is possible in many cases to arrive at approximate dates.

The writer of this letter, Banâ-ša-Marduk, is known from records of the Kassite period from Nippur, though there must be two persons with this name since the period covered is too long for a single individual. The occurrences in dated documents are Kurigalzu [II] 20<sup>14</sup> and Nazimaruttaš 4<sup>15</sup> (the individual in Šagaraktišuriaš 5<sup>16</sup> cannot be the same man). Particularly important here is the letter BE 17 9, also written by Banâ-ša-Marduk, especially if Kidinnû, mentioned together with Banâ-ša-Marduk in BE 14 34:6 (Kurigalzu 20) should be the *ḥazannu* of the village Bīt-Kidinnî in BE 17 9:23. Kidinnû is known to have been a *ḥazannu* in another town in the 11th year of Kadašmanturgu.<sup>17</sup> Banâ-ša-Marduk is also mentioned in the letter PBS 1/2 57:16 and 32. Banâ-ša-Marduk would thus seem to have functioned in Nippur in the latter part of the reign of Kurigalzu II and probably into the reign of Kadašmanturgu. By the time of this letter he had risen to a position of considerable responsibility.

It is known that the Kassites were active in building in the sacred area, for a number of their inscriptions<sup>18</sup> have been found there, including some brick inscriptions.<sup>19</sup> The earlier excavators of the Ekur reported substantial rebuilding in the time of Kadašmanturgu.<sup>20</sup> It is thus possible

for an earlier period, Sidney Smith, JRAS 1932 295. The practice was probably much more common in Mesopotamia than has been recognized.

14. BE 14 34:6.

15. PBS 2/2 20:13.

16. BE 14 130:8.

17. BE 14 99a:35.

18. For a list, see K. Jaritz, "Quellen zur Geschichte der Kaššû-Dynastie," MIO 6 225ff., also Faisal El-Wailly, Sumer 10 43-54.

19. e.g. PBS 15 58 and 68 (Kadašman-Enlil). For a preliminary statement about Kassite construction in the Enlil temple as uncovered in recent excavations, see Steele, University Museum Bulletin 16 No. 2 (1951) p. 24, also McCown, JNES 11 171f.

20. See Hilprecht, In the Temple of Bēl at Nippur p. 37. The brick inscriptions of this king have been referred to repeatedly, e.g. Peters Nippur 2 126 and Hilprecht, The Excavations in Assyria and Babylonia 371, but have never been published.

that our letter refers to this construction work, or work related to it, and should therefore be dated to the reign of Kadašmanturgu, though, of course, it might also refer to work done under any of the other Kassite kings who built there.

The contents of the letter can be summarized briefly as follows: greeting (1), report on offerings and rites of the temple (2–4), report on the work on the temples (5–13), report on irrigation problems and labor difficulties (14–21), report on the suspension of certain deliveries of fish (22–28), further report on construction work (29–35), further report about irrigation problems (36–42).

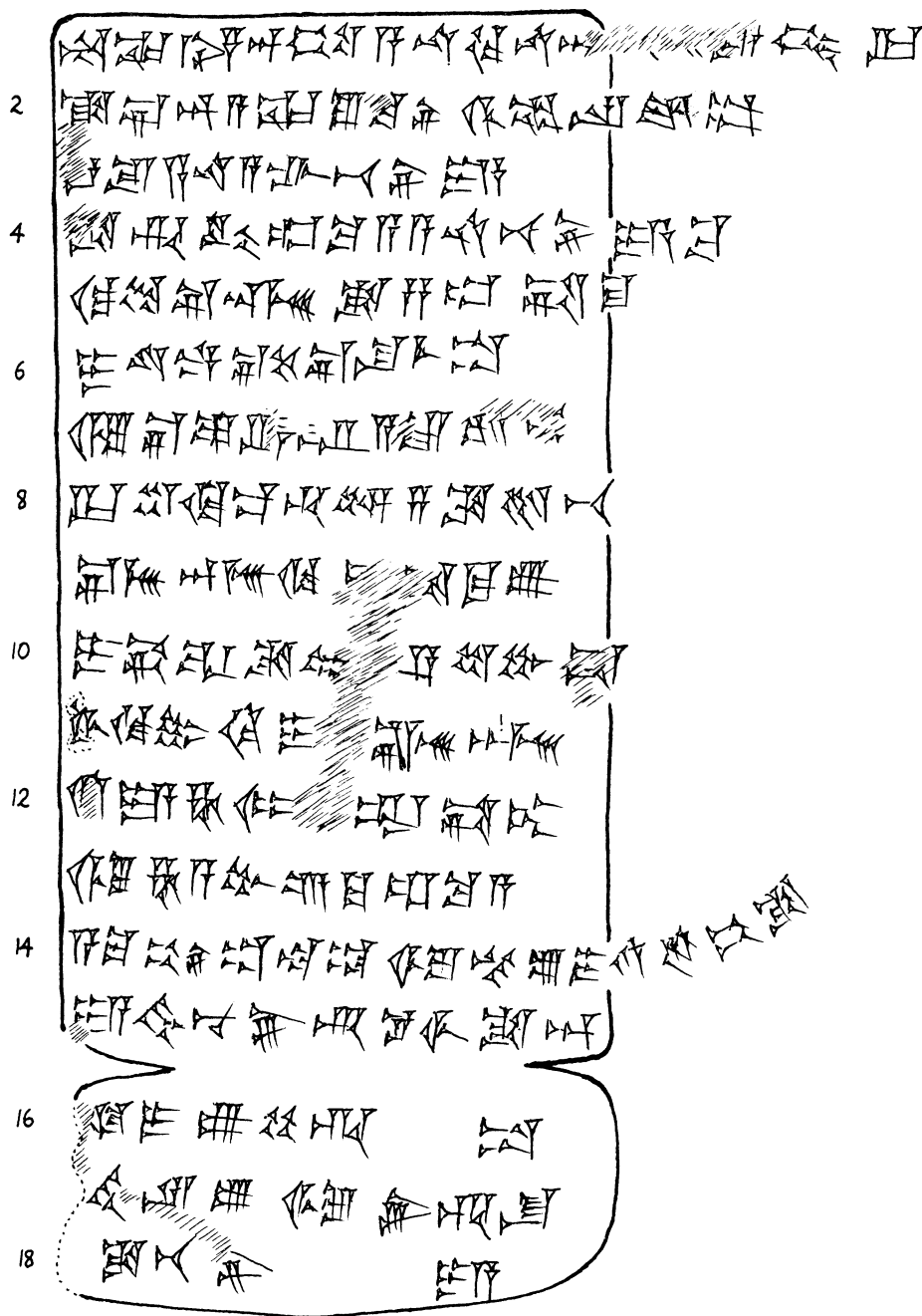
- 1 ARAD-ka <sup>m</sup>DÛ-šá-<sup>d</sup>AMAR.UTU a-na di-  
na-a[n be-lí]-<sup>ra</sup>ia<sup>1</sup> lul-lik
- 2 ša É DINGIR a-ka-lu ba-ni ši-ka-ru ta-ab
- 3 [ki]b-su a-na a-mar be-lí-ia
- 4 [š]a-ri-ik um-ma-a a-na be-lí-ia-ma
- 5 dul-li É DINGIR.MEŠ ša ša-ab-ta-ku
- 6 i-na KÁ É.KUR É.ŠU.ME.DU
- 7 ù É.KA(?) .UR(?) .RA a-su-pa-<sup>ra</sup>a<sup>1</sup>-<sup>ra</sup>tim<sup>1</sup>
- 8 ur-te-ki-is hu-uš-ša ša li-mit
- 9 É.MEŠ DINGIR.MEŠ ki-<sup>ra</sup>i<sup>1</sup> <sup>ra</sup>id<sup>1</sup>-ku-ú
- 10 i-ga-ra ša SI[G<sub>4</sub>.MEŠ] <sup>ra</sup>e<sup>1</sup>-te-pu-uš
- 11 ši-ki-in ti-i-[ti] É.MEŠ DINGIR(!).MEŠ
- 12 ki-i a-ḫa-mi-[iš] al-ta-kan
- 13 ù ḫa-a-pu lab-ku um-ma-a
- 14 ÍD bi-ni ab-la-at ù mu-ú i-na lib-bi-ša
- 15 ia-<sup>nu</sup>nu er-re-e-ši ša DINGIR
- 16 ki-i ú-še-ri-du
- 17 ḫe-ru-ú ù er-re-šu
- 18 ša be-lí-ia
- 19 [u]l še-mu-nin-ni be-lí de-ka-a liš-pu-r[a]-  
a[m-m]a
- 20 <sup>ra</sup>lid<sup>1</sup>-ke-e-š[u]-nu-ti-ma li-ri-du-ú-ma
- 21 [x a]m be-lí-ia ÍD(!?) lul-te-si-ig
- 22 ù LÚ.ŠU.ḪA.MEŠ tam-tim
- 23 ša a-na É GAL(?) <sup>ra</sup>ḫi<sup>ra</sup>ki ù É ŠEŠ.AN<sup>ki</sup>
- 24 ge-e-na-a i-za-bi-lu DUMU-<sup>m</sup>SU-<sup>d</sup>XXX
- 25 ki-i it-ba-lu-šu-nu-ti ge-e-nu-ú ḪA.MEŠ
- 26 ba-ti-ig DUMU-<sup>m</sup>SU-<sup>d</sup>XXX i-tu-ú
- 27 be-lí-ia šu-ú be-lí liš-al-šu-ma
- 28 ge-e-nu-ú la ba-ti-ig
- 29 ù ša dul-li ša É lu/ku x x a-ra-am-[m]a
- 30 ù i-ga-ri-ša ti-i-ta al-ta-kan
- 31 i-ga-ra šu-pa-la-a ki-<sup>ra</sup>i<sup>1</sup> <sup>ra</sup>iḫ<sup>1</sup>-lu-šu
- 32 ti-i-ta al-ta-kan a-gur-ru le-eb-né-et
- 33 ù si-ku-ru ia-<sup>nu</sup>nu be-lí tē-e-ma
- 34 liš-kun-ma si-ku-ri li-id-di-nu-ma
- 35 dul-la lu-uk-šu-ud

- 36 ÍD ra(!)-ḫi pi-i ze-re-e
- 37 in-da-la ù GIŠ.GIŠIMMAR.MEŠ i-na  
me-<sup>ra</sup>e<sup>1</sup>
- 38 ša DINGIR ù ša be-lí-ia
- 39 i-lu-ú be-lí liš-pur-ra-am-m[a]
- 40 iš-tu bi-it <sup>m</sup>Ri-ḫe-e-et-DINGIR ma-<sup>nu</sup>da ù  
ša <sup>ra</sup>ú<sup>1</sup>-(x x)]
- 41 <sup>ra</sup>nam<sup>1</sup>-ga-ra iš-tu i-di-ig-la-at a-na lib-bi-ša
- 42 l[u]-uḫ-ra-am-ma GIŠ.GIŠIMMAR.MEŠ  
la i-lu-ú

### Translation

I, your servant Banâ-ša-Marduk, would go as a substitute for my lord. As for the temple, the food is good, the beer sweet, the rites ready for my lord's inspection. Thus to my lord: as to (5) the work on the temples in which I am engaged, I have already connected the vestibules(?) with the gateways of Ekur, Ešumeša, and Ekiur(?). When they took down the reed fences around the temples, (10) I made a mud brick wall. I have applied the layer of mud plaster all over the temples and the coloring materials are (still) wet. Further: the Tamarisk Canal has dried up and there is no water in it. (15) When I sent down the farm laborers of the god, the diggers and the farm laborers of my lord would not obey me. Let my lord send me a summoner for corvée work so (20) he can call them up and so they can go on, and then I will ... the ... of my lord (and?) the canal(?). As for the sea fishermen who used to bring the regular offerings to ... and ... (25) — when Mār-Erība-Sin withdrew them, the fish offerings ceased. Since Mār-Erība-Sin himself is with my lord, my lord should ask him so that the regular offerings may not be discontinued. And as for the work on the ... -building, (30) I have applied the mud plaster to the ramp(?) and its(?) wall. When they scraped off the lower wall, I applied the mud plaster. The baked bricks have been made, but there are no bolts. If my lord gives an order for them to provide the bolts, (35) I shall finish the work. The Pipe Canal has filled up with chaff from the winnowers, and the date palms have become too high from the water of the god and my lord (for it to reach them). Let my lord give me instructions. (40) From Bit-Rihēt-ili on there are many (date palms without water?). And as for the ..., I would even dig out the *namgāru*-canal from the Tigris to it so the date palms will not be too high.

ob v.



## NOTES TO THE TEXT

2. These phrases occur in other Middle Babylonian letters: *ša É.MEŠ DINGIR.MEŠ a-kalum ba-ni ši-ka-ru ta-a-ab ki-ib-su ba-ni šu-ru-ub-tum ša-al-ma-at* "as for the temples, the food is good, the beer sweet, the rites good, the income in order" *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Fried-*

*rich-Schiller Universität Jena* 8 569:3 ff.; an unfavorable report is *NINDA-ma ul ba-ni KAŠ. SAG-ma ul ta-a-ab ù kib-su-um-ma ul ba-ni* PBS 1/2 27:5 f., also *ki-i-ki-i NINDA la ba-na-a ù KAŠ.SAG la ta-ba a-na É.DINGIR.MEŠ ša be-lī-ia ù še-er-ri-ib* PBS 1/2 54:4 f. In spite of a few occurrences of *KAŠ reštū* (e.g. *KAŠ reš-tu-ù*



rev.

42

40

20  
 22  
 24  
 26  
 28  
 30  
 33  
 35  
 37  
 39

RAcc. 68:19), KAŠ.SAG should here and probably in most cases be read simply *šikaru*; note KAŠ.SAG glossed *ši-ka-ru* in ABL 1396:6, also KAŠ.SAG *ul ta-am-ma NINDA ul ba-ni-ma i-na ba-lu* PN NINDA KAŠ *ù mi-re-eš-tum i-nam-di-in-ma* “(if) the beer is not sweet and the food not good or if he issues any food, beer, or anything (else) requested without the permission of PN” BE 14 42:6–10, and written *ši-ka-ri* *ibid.* 14.

3. *kibsu* in these texts should probably be compared to *kubussu* in Susa, a term employed in legal texts in connection with remission of debts, and always used of either gods or kings. The word may have had originally a connection with temple procedures (see Koschaker, Or. NS 4 38–47 for a discussion of the term). *kibsu* probably refers to the totality of the cultic activities of the temple (note the replacement of *kibsu* by *riksu* “offering arrangement” in a text cited below) and should be translated “rites.”

4. Cf. *aš-šum rik-si ša be-lī iš-pu-ra rik-su ba-ni a-na a-mar be-lī-ia ša-ri-ik* “as for the offering arrangement that my lord wrote me about, the offering arrangement is fine, it is . . . for my lord to see” PBS 1/2 54:6, perhaps also *a-na be-lī-ia ul ša-ar-ku* CT 43 59:20. Neither *šarāku* “give, present *ex voto*” or *šarāqu* “steal”, fits well in these passages (which are not paralleled outside Middle Babylonian texts). It seems necessary to posit a second verb *šarāku*, yielding a meaning “ready, prepared” in the stative.

6. É.KUR and É.ŠU.ME.DU are well known as the temples of Enlil and Ninurta, respectively, in Nippur; both figure to a considerable extent in Sumerian literature. According to an Old Babylonian document, the Ekur had three gateways: *nam . i . du<sub>8</sub> ká . 3 . a . bi šà É . kur . ra* “the office of gatekeeper for the three gateways in Ekur” PBS 8/2 133:6. Writings in normal Sumerian are ambiguous for the reading of É.ŠU.ME.DU. Edzard ZZB 94 n. 458 proposes Ešumegin on the basis of É.šu.me.DU.na in TCL 16 66:34; É.šu.me.DU.mu in SBH p. 84 r. 10 suggests a reading Ešumetum, but Jacobsen, ZA 52 103 n. 19 has shown on the basis of phonetic writings in Sumerian that the temple name is to be read É.šu.me.ša<sub>4</sub>. Note the interpretation É.ŠU.ME.DU : É *gi-mir par-ši ha-am-mu* : É *Nin-urta* “Ešumeša : the temple which gathers all divine offices : the temple of Ninurta” RA 14 173:7, restored from duplicates KAV 43 r. 8 and Ebeling Parfümrez. pl. 41:8;

see also Frankena Tākultu p. 125:151. In most similar interpretations of temple names, the Akkadian is a translation of the elements of the Sumerian name. Except for the obvious ME = *paršu*, this interpretation is unclear. For other references to É.ŠU.ME.DU, see RLA 2 p. 479. Evidence now available suggests strongly that Ešumeša was part of Duranki, the name given to the entire sacred precinct around the Ekur. Not only have numerous votive objects dedicated to Ninurta been found in the immediate area (see the comment on line 7), but documents from the Ninurta temple were found in the fill of a Parthian platform in the Inanna temple (see V. E. Crawford, Archaeology 12 77f.), which can hardly have come from far away. If the so-called North Temple (Crawford, op. cit. 76) is not Ešumeša, it is rather to be located in an unexcavated area near the Ekur.

7. The reading of the temple name is uncertain. It seems to be partially erased. A temple É.KA.UR.RA is unattested elsewhere. While literary texts and votive inscriptions give us hundreds of names of temples and shrines, often with long elaborate names in Sumerian, ordinary documents normally refer only to the most famous temples by name, all others being called simply É “X” “temple of the god X.” Even the great Inanna temple in Nippur is in a Middle Babylonian document called simply É “UN.GAL EN.LÍL” BE 14 148:15 and 18. (For this deity and her connection with the Inanna temple, see A. Goetze, JCS 17 131.) From the numerous inscribed lapis discs found in the sacred area (mostly published in BE 1/1 and PBS 15) we know that the Kassite kings expressed a particular devotion to Enlil, Ninlil, Ninurta, and Nusku. In the document BE 14 148 the temples of these same deities are given at the head of the list. It seems probable that É.KA(?)UR(?)RA is a singular writing for É.KI.ÛR, the temple of Ninlil, located (see the map of Nippur, most conveniently available in Kramer, The Sumerians following p. 64) facing the Ekur. If not, it is possibly the name of the Nusku temple in Nippur, not so far attested by name, so far as I know.

A certain identification of *asuppu*, an architectural feature of houses, palaces, and temples, has not yet been made, but it is probably a kind of vestibule. It is often mentioned with *tarbašu* “courtyard.” It was large enough to include bedrooms: *aš-šum É.GIŠ.NÁ.MEŠ ša ŠĀ a-su-up-*

*pa-ti* “as for the bedrooms in the *asuppu*’s” BE 17 23:14. A document from Dūr-Kurigalzu records issue of *taktimtu*-cloth for the doorway of the “long *asuppu*” Sumer 9 34ff. 26:4.

11. Several distinct meanings for *šiknu* have been recognized, one of them connected with irrigation. (See Laessøe, JCS 7 24 for discussion. Other references are collected by Borger, BiOr 14 191 f.) The word also occurs in connection with buildings (CT 38 13:103, *ibid.* 14:1) where it appears as a structural part of a house; see also KAR 176 r. i 13. In our passage *ši-ki-in ti-i-[ti]* seems to mean “layer of mud plaster.” Note the obscure passage Gössmann Era I 140 where *šiknu* possibly refers to the overlay of the statue, presumably at least partly of silver since it had turned dark.

13. Probably *hāpu* is the name for the thin, final layer of mud plaster; it may well have had, as other passages suggest, a coloring agent added. Only in rare instances, however, have such colored areas been preserved in Mesopotamian temples. The green, pink, and yellow walls mentioned by Peters Nippur 2 154 in his description of the “temple of Bêl” belong not to the temple, but to the Parthian fortress built around the zigurat. Since *ribku* is a substantive, we must here read *labku*.

14. The Tamarisk Canal is not included in the Kassite period map of a region near Nippur (most recently published, with Langdon’s copy, by J. J. Finkelstein, JNES 21 80; for a more legible photograph, see Museum Journal 7 264). It is not known in other published documents from Nippur.

15. Such parallels between property or workers of the god (Enlil) and the king (always referred to as “my lord”) are common in Middle Babylonian letters. Cf. 3 SAL.MEŠ *ša be-li-ia* “my lord’s three women” PBS 1/2 42:9, SAL.MEŠ *ša DIN-GIR* “the god’s women” *ibid.* 22, *mi-in-di* SAL.MEŠ *ša be-li-ia* “perhaps my lord’s women” *ibid.* 24, also SAL.MEŠ *an-na-ṭi* “these women” *ibid.* 25 (collated).

21. The text has 2 *ku* (or possibly *lu*). The whole line is obscure, partly for lack of a satisfactory restoration. The interpretation of *lul-te-si-iq* is also uncertain; other references are cited Aro Glossar s.v. *ešēqu*; it would seem to belong to the same class of verbs as *šutēmuqu* and others of the so-called “Št Lex.” type. See von Soden GAG §94c and the paradigm p. 13\*. One of the occurrences is in BE 17 9, another letter written

by Banâ-ša-Marduk. Because of the precativè, the line obviously goes with the preceding lines dealing with labor troubles.

23. The geographical problems seem impossible to solve with the information available since the place names are not known. Did the “sea fishermen” in fact fish in the sea, or is *tāmtu* also a term for the open water in the marshes? Did the *genû*-offerings consist of fresh fish, or were they dried or pickled for transport? If they were transported fresh from the sea, they could hardly have been brought anywhere near the Nippur region before they spoiled. If the towns mentioned are near the sea, we must assume that Nippur had a degree of administrative control far to the south. Note 3 *qa* Ī.DU<sub>10</sub>.GA *a-na* KASKAL *tam-tim* “three *qa*’s of fine oil for the journey (to) the sea” BE 14 134:2. Admittedly, we know very little about the area controlled by Ur, Uruk, and other cities in these years.

24. The reason for the long *e* in *ge-e-na-a* is uncertain. It is hardly a question. For other such writings, see Aro Gramm. 28. On the basis of the writings here and *ge-e-nu-u* in BIN 1 152:1 the word should be transcribed *genû* instead of *ginû*. Names of the type Mār-Eriḫa-Sin are very common in Kassite Nippur, but also occur in other periods (e.g. Ur III, see Eames Coll. p. 186). While the determinative always follows the DUMU or DUMU.SAL, it is clear that the whole functions as a single name. Typical examples are DUMU.SAL-<sup>md</sup>*Me-li-sah* BE 15 60:3, DUMU-<sup>m</sup>*E-ri-bi* BE 14 131:4, and DUMU-<sup>m</sup>*Ra-bi-me-lam-ma-šu* BE 15 64:8.

29. Because of the following lines, É is certainly the correct reading, though, as often, only GĪŠ can be seen. The rest of the line is uncertain. Possibly this section does not refer to the temples mentioned above, but to some other construction.

30. The interpretation of *ša* as a suffix pronoun is uncertain, for it is not clear what it refers to. There is no evidence elsewhere that *arammu* is feminine. It may refer to the undeciphered word. Perhaps emend to *ù ša i-ga-ri ti-i-ṭa al-ta-kan*.

32. Cf. 10 LIM SIG<sub>4</sub>.AL.LÚ.ÛR.RA GAL.MEŠ *la-ab-na-at* “ten thousand big bricks have been made” BE 17 23:11 (Note LÚ in this logogram, showing that the scribe pronounced the logogram to himself in Sumerian.) For the stative *lebnet*, cf. the Neo-Babylonian infinitive *lebēnu* cited AHW. s.v. *labānu*, possibly to be



explained as due to the change  $a > e$  after  $l$ ; see von Soden GAG §9b. A Middle Babylonian parallel is *le-bé-en ap(!)-pi* Hinke Kudurru ii 10.

**33.** What kind of bolt is here meant is uncertain; several were needed and the work could not be completed without them; they were apparently not available locally. Lack of essential items seems to have been a common complaint. Note in another letter concerned with building: GIŠ.MEŠ *i-na URU.KI ia-a-nu* "there is no wood in the town" BE 17 66:27 and GIŠ.ŪR.MEŠ *ia-a-nu* "there are no roof beams" *ibid.* 29. (This letter gives an unusually detailed description of building and expresses concern that the work be carried out at a time the hemerologies indicate as propitious.)

**36.** For grammatical reasons (*ra-ti* can only be a genitive singular since the plural is not *rātū* but *rātātu*) it is necessary to take ID *ra-ti* as a *Flurname*. Note the geographical name Būr-rātāti, written URU PŪ-*ra-ta-ti* KAJ 21:19, URU Bu-*ra-ti*[*a-ti*] KAJ 24:10. It is assumed here that *zērê* is for the normal *zārê* "winnowers." For the problem of the verb *zarû*, see CAD s.v. *zarû* p. 71b. If my interpretation of this line is correct, the canal must have passed very near a threshing floor which was in use at the time, suggesting that the letter was written in early summer when most of this work is usually done.

**37.** I owe the suggested interpretation of this line to Professor Oppenheim. There are no other references to palm trees in published documents from Kassite Nippur, though dates are mentioned frequently.

**39.** For discussion of verbs written with a doubled final consonant, see most recently Gelb, BiOr 12 101 and Aro Gramm. 73 f.

**40.** No reading except *bi* seems possible here; it is probably written over an incompletely erased sign; other stray wedges appear above the following signs. The name Rihêt-ili is not previously attested in Middle Babylonian. For the name type, see Stamm Namengebung 305. Bit Rihêt-ili is probably the name of a locality controlled by a sheikh. Cf. a place name URU É *ṀRi-ḥe-e-tu* frequently attested in Nippur documents from the Murašû archives (see, e.g., PBS 2/1 index p. 41). *û* is written in the very corner of the tablet; if it is not KŪŠ (= *rātu*), the word probably continued over the edge, now destroyed. Read *Ṁû-[ga-ri]*?

**41.** For other writings of *namgaru* in Middle

Babylonian, with the syllables *kar* and QAR, see Aro Glossar p. 70; for the related verb *mekêru* in Middle Babylonian, see Aro, op. cit. p. 58. The *namgaru* is a type of irrigation canal. Note especially a map showing *namgaru*'s, JNES 21 80: *nam-gar ṀEN-šû-nu* (lower left, written upside down), also *nam-gar bur-si-maš-ḫu*. The *namgaru* in each case flows from the main canal, the *nāru*. Does the *namgaru* in our text lead from the Tigris toward Nippur? We know that the Euphrates, or at least a main branch of it, still flowed through Nippur in this period. It must sometimes have had an insufficient flow for irrigation, or even gone completely dry. Peters describes the Euphrates in the winter of 1889–90 as having dried up completely and the marshes between Diwaniyeh and Nippur being dry land (Peters Nippur 2 60 ff.). Likewise, in 1904 the Euphrates was dry (Banks Bismya 375). The Tigris, with its headwaters in the mountains, provides a greater amount of water in the summer than the Euphrates, but is not such an easy source for irrigation since between Baghdad and Kut it is lower than the land it flows through, making free flow irrigation possible only during the very high water season. The riverine tracts here are dependent on lift irrigation. (See A. Sousa, Irrigation in Iraq, Baghdad, 1945, pp. 9 f. and E. Wirth, Agrargeographie des Irak [Hamburger Geographische Studien, Heft 13], 1962, p. 95.) Yet, it seems from this letter, and also from BE 17 34:26, a very broken passage dealing with irrigation, that at least in the Kassite period, the Tigris was used for irrigation. If the bed of the Tigris was below the surrounding land then as now, as is probable, it was necessary to use a lifting device. Perhaps, then, a *namgaru*-canal — whether it comes directly from a great river or from another canal, as in the map cited above — is a canal which is fed by a hoisting device. (See Laessøe, JCS 7 5–26 for a discussion of irrigation equipment.) If Laessøe is correct that the water wheel (Arabic *nāṣūra*) and the *čerd* were not used in Ancient Mesopotamia before the Neo-Assyrian period, it must have been the hand-operated *šādūf* (known in Iraq as *dālīa*), that was used on the Tigris, though Adams, Land Behind Baghdad 65 is surely correct in pointing out that water could not be drawn profitably from the deep bed of the Tigris with a *šādūf*. Have we here then a hint that an animal-operated mechanism was in use already in the Kassite period?